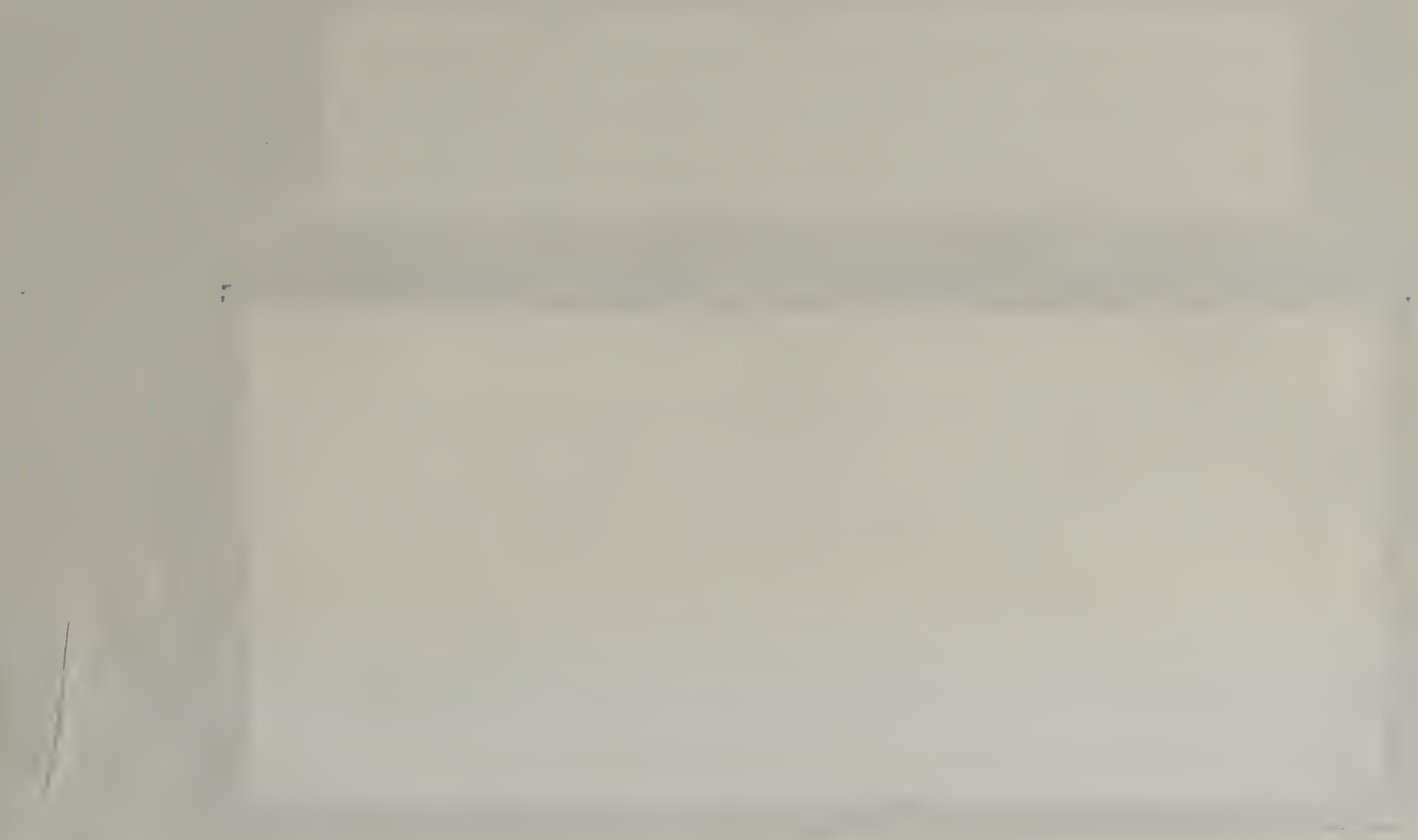
Silver Lake Revisited

A Pictorial

Compiled and Edited by

Gerry O'Reilly



For more information about Silver Lake,
refer to the Wilmington Town Crier:

"Fifty Years ago at Silver Lake", July, 1958

"The Daredevil Balloonist", September, 1962

"The Ice Industry in Wilmington", May, 1962

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PREFACE

In the spring of 1996 after "Wilmington: A Retrospective " was published, I received a call from Dorothy LaFionatis of the Historical Commission. She told me that a gentleman who lived on Dudley Road in South Tewksbury had some old negatives that seemed to be of Silver Lake a long time ago; he wondered if the Historical Commission would be interested in having them. Dorothy said "Yes!" She immediately called me and within the hour I was at the home of Tippy and Maxine Burgess on Dudley Road (if one stood on the end of Dudley, one could throw a rock in the lake; its that close).

I knew both of them; they are Silver Lake old timers. As soon as I arrived, I was at the kitchen table looking at some old 5 by 7 glass negatives stacked unseparated in an old wooden box, rubbing up against each other. I removed one to get a closer look; the negative showed two buildings in the woods, no street only bushes and pines. Painted on the face of one of the buildings was a full sign: "Forbes". I held the neg to the light and peered at the image, Then, I recognized the building as I had known it from my youth, Coughlan's Store on Bay State Road in South Tewksbury. (Bay State is a side road off of Lake Street.)

My fingers jumped into the box: Lake Street - a dirt road, Grove Ave. - a summer mecca, the ice house on Main Street, the Silver Lake train station, The Shawsheen Tea Room, Wilmington Center, a summer cottage under the pine trees, plus 40 more images.

By comparing the negatives to some postcards of the same era it is quite obvious that the pictures were taken by the same person or company that produced the postcards. The reverse script that is scratched on the negatives was done by the same hand as that shown on some of the postcards. A Mass. license on one of the autos pictured is dated 1918, thus dating the negatives.

Where did the negatives come from?

Tippy Burgess has an older brother, Leslie. Les lives in South Royalston, Mass. He was in the process of cleaning out his attic when he came across the negatives and was about to toss them out but decided to get a closer look . He saw immediately that they were of Silver Lake as he remembered it so many years ago (Les is 81). Les called Tippy to see if he would have any use for them. Tippy said "Yes", and as soon as he had them in his hands he immediately called the Historical Commission. Les had no idea where the negs came from but felt that they might have been used by another brother, Chet. Chet was a former Wilmington police officer and an amateur photographer and may very well have had the negatives while processing his photographic work.

When Tippy gave me the negatives I could not wait until I showed them to the Historical Commission for the glimpses of Silver Lake of so many summers ago. The Commission approved the processing of the negatives into finished photographs and those photos along with some others are presented in this book, "Silver Lake Revisited".

Gerry O'Reilly

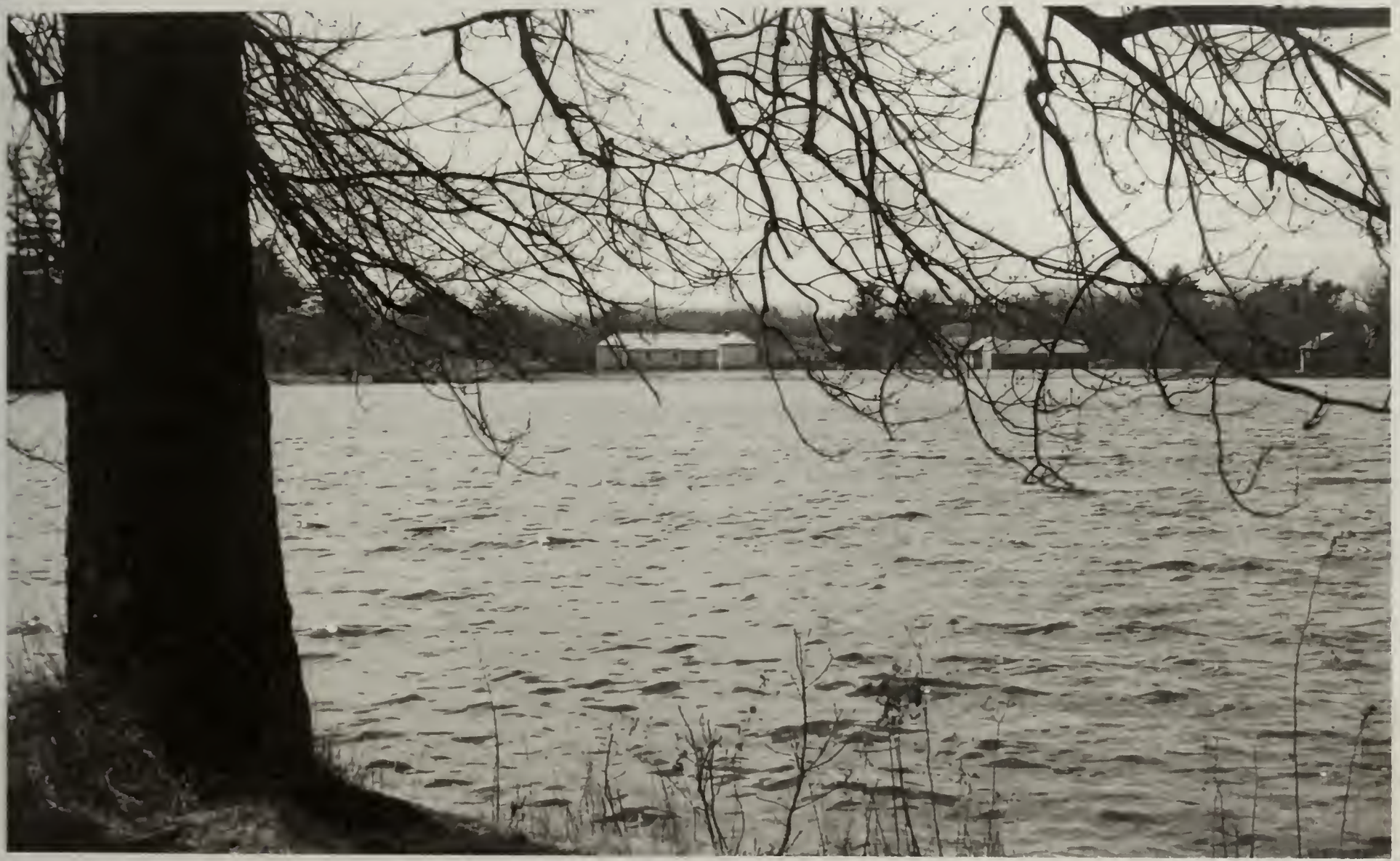
Prior to World War II, Silver Lake was the center of a geographical entity between Wilmington, on its southern border, and Tewksbury, on its northern border. The area of Silver Lake extended along Route 38 from the Black Kat {where the 129 bridge is now} to the Shawsheen River in Tewksbury. It stretched east to west from Salem Street to Hopkins Street.

The visuals of Silver Lake were mostly taken around 1920.

Silver Lake at Main Street

The view is from Main Street along Lake Street.

Mildred Rogers School



The Mildred S. Rogers School was named for the principal of the Silver Lake School; she died in the Coconut Grove fire in Boston in 1942.

The Mildred Rogers School

The school opened its doors in 1939 as the new Silver Lake School. The first and second grades occupied the building; the third and fourth were still in the "Portable"-single session.

Lake Street

The view is toward Main Street. The Eaton home is in the background.

The "SLBA"

The Silver Lake Betterment Association was the social center of all activity at the "Lake" all year round

View of the Lake from Lake Street

The Silver Lake School is shown in the left background; "Bloodsucker" beach is in the center on the opposite shore.

Silver Lake from Lake Street

View from Lake Street to "Skylark" beach in the far background.

Lake Street

View along Lake Street.

Lake Street at Silver Lake Street

View on Lake Street towards Main Street.

Lake Street at Silverhurst Avenue

The trees are banded probably to guard against the Gypsy Moth.

Flag Poles on Lake Street

Melzar Home is in the background; every home had a flag pole.

Ice House on Main Street

The stones along the shore prevented erosion and kept the lakeside neat. The stones were removed in the late twenties; no one can remember why. As a result of the stones being removed, the lake shore eroded.

Pop Neilson's "Elms"

The Elms was on the corner of Harnden Street and Glen Road. It was the first hotel in the Lake area. The Elms was a 16-room boarding house that had 8 fireplaces and an adjacent 8-room overflow house

Ice House and Baby Beach

View of the ice house and "Baby" Beach on Grove Avenue. A bath house is on the shore at the beach.

Baby Beach

The bath house is shown on the right at "Baby" Beach on Grove Avenue.

Baby Beach

The boys of Silver Lake summers

Baby Beach

More of summer boys with on-lookers at "Baby" beach.

Porterfield's Store

Tom Porterfield's store was at the Tewksbury/Wilmington line on Main Street at the corner of Vernon Street.

Busy Bee

The Busy Bee was on the edge of Milligan's Grove on Main Street in Tewksbury.

Milligan's Grove

Bert Milligan lived at 2 Main Street. The field was also called Rainey's Field and the Evangelist Camp Meeting Ground. Now the site of the "Pines".

St. Mary's Church

Former home of the Silver Lake Library Association; it then became the Silver Lake Catholic Literary Association. St. Mary's Church was located in the building until the new church was built in Thompson's Grove: St. Dorothy's. The site is now the Tewksbury VFW.

Schmidt's Store

The store is located on Main Street in Tewksbury and its former names were "Clark's Store" and "Lenny's and Maria's". It is now Hobart's Country Store.

Schmidt's Store about 1925

The store housed an ice cream parlor and had a gas station next door. Behind the gas station and set back from the street was a reputed well-known "Speakeasy". Early in the 40's Armando DeCarolis, Sr. remodeled the store to the present structure for Mr. Clark.

Corner of Glenwood and Elmwood, South Tewksbury

This undeveloped area of South Tewksbury contained some fine summer cottages.

McClarenville on the road to the Shawsheen River

The McClarenville meeting house was also used by the Oblates from the Novitiate in Tewksbury for a place to hold Sunday masses for the summer residents from the city.

A Rest Cabin somewhere near Silver Lake

Mrs. Norris's Forest Rest cabin somewhere near Silver Lake.

The Ewe and Eye Bungalow somewhere near Silver Lake

These young men up from the "City" rented summer cottages around Silver Lake. The look of free-spirited, casual summer enjoyment shows in their faces – Who are they?

A Typical Summer Cottage

This well-built, summer cottage was somewhere near the Lake. The Automobile is a "brand-spanking new" model.

Bay State Road, South Tewksbury

The street was paved, and the store's name was changed to Coughlan's, then to Mullen's, then to Daly's, and then to Leahy's. It is now a year-round home on Bay State Road.

Old Ice House Road

View of the Union ice house where the Town beach is today.

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Old Ice House Road

The Cottage House and the Union ice house are on the shore at Grove Avenue. The "Moxie" sign is on the small white building.

The Moxie Sign

When the building burned down, a new, one-story replaced it: The Fuller home. A new "Moxie" sign was painted on the side of the building, which was then visible from Grove Ave. The sign was painted over about 1943. Moxie was the drink; Moxie is the beach.

Danger Beach

Swimmers on the ice house loading dock [The cut blocks of ice were poled between the two docks and then were loaded into the ice house]. The danger to the swimmers is quite clear, thus the name "Danger" beach.

Grove Avenue

Grove Avenue was an unpaved street; the Cottage House is in the center and the Union ice house is on the lake shore to the rear.

Grove Avenue

A summer day at Silver Lake.

C/O

Moxie Beach

A post card picture of summer fun.

Moxie Beach

See the photo display in Demoulas.

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Moxie Beach

More summer swimmers.

View towards Main Street from Moxie beach.

George Stevens' market, the Silver Lake Betterment Association, and the Ice House are shown quite clearly in a view from Moxie Beach.

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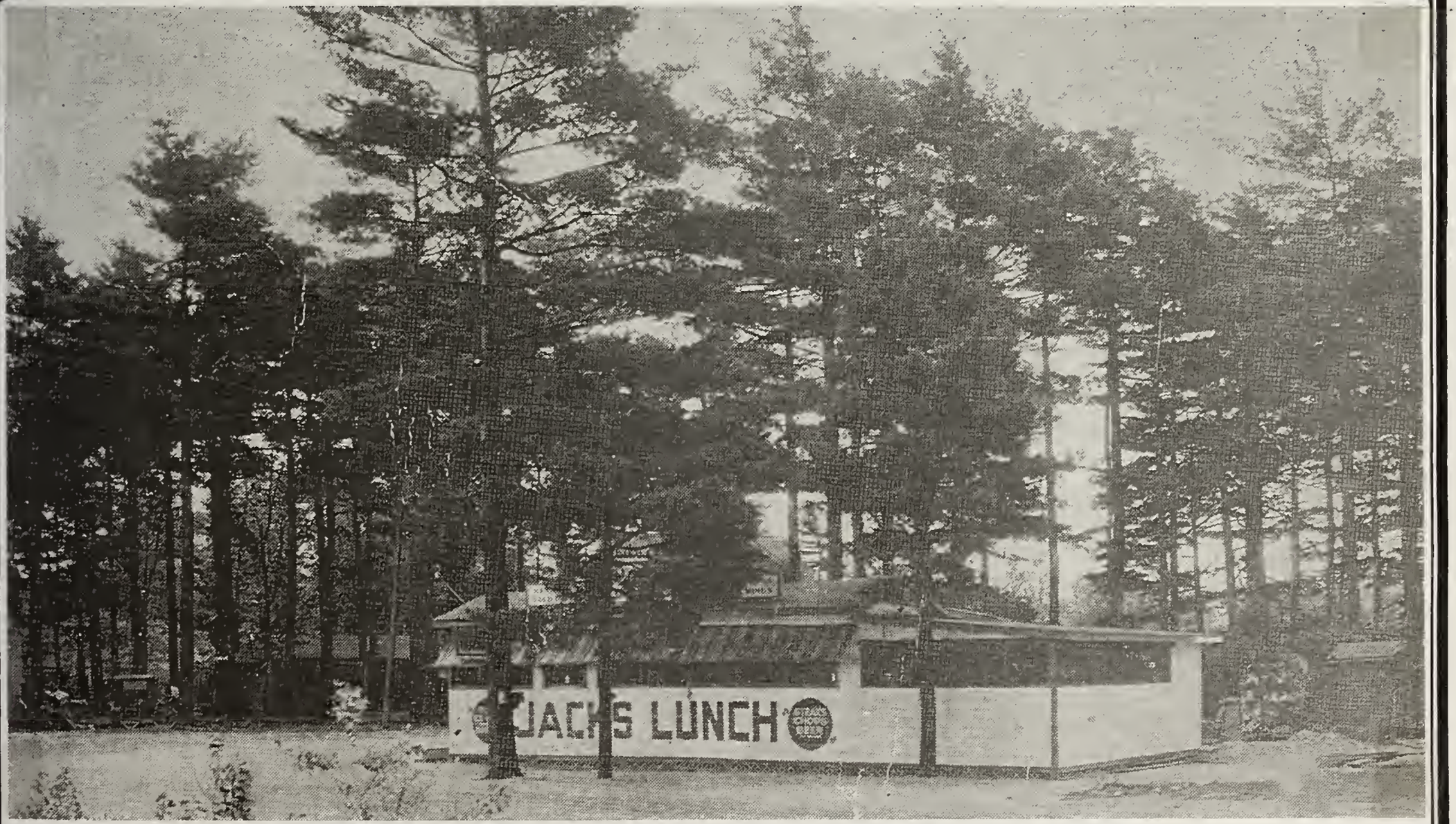
Grove Avenue

The view towards Main Street from "Moxie" Beach.

Jack's Lunch



Jack McLean was the owner, and the word – from those who remember – is that the fried clams that were cooked in Jack's were the best that were ever cooked, and – the former patrons claim – that's a fact.

Silver Lake Railroad Station

The station was located on Wild Ave. beyond Jack's Lunch. The station was the stop off point for all of the city people that flocked to Silver Lake for summer fun and the entertainment that the summer resort provided.

Maroon Field

Maroon field was located between Cottage Street and Veranda Avenue. Maroon Field was a Silver Lake playground: Carnivals, baseball games, football games, hot air balloon shows, Jackson Club fairs , and every other summer activity possible.

Jackson-Johnson summer carnival.

Maroon Field

Carnival fairway

Maroon Field

Parking on Cottage Street - License plates are dated 1918.

Maroon Field

Maroon Field on Cottage Street featuring the Silver Lake Amateur Athletic Association baseball team.

Maroon Field

The game is on.

The visions presented were made available to the Historical Commission by the following:

The Burgess Family

Mary Paulsen

Jim Durkee

Adele Passmore

Norinne Markey

Ira Seskin

Joyce Dalton

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